

The Brethren

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Attached is a short note prepared by my colleagues as a stimulus or provocation to debate. I would like to discuss these ideas at our meeting on Thursday, 21 October.

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Attachment

Distribution:

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*✓ Brethren
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Will 1972 Be The Big Year?

As part of our continuing review of Hanoi's near and long-term intentions, the following working hypotheses, assumptions and possible actions are presented below in order to stimulate a debate on the possible course of action Hanoi might undertake next year:

Working Hypothesis

Hanoi may wish to stage a variant rerun of 1968 in 1972 -- the U.S. election year -- and undertake a coordinated military-political-diplomatic offensive in order to bring the war to an early conclusion.

Assumptions

- (1) The military capabilities exist.
- (2) There is a will to engage in intensified combat.
- (3) Hanoi realizes that 1972 may be the last time that it can dramatically strike at U.S. support for Vietnamization by political pressures generated during a U.S. presidential year.
- (4) Hanoi realizes that the defeat of Vietnamization is a requirement for the final victory in South Vietnam.

A Possible Course of Action

In South Vietnam:

MR-1: Sweep through and around the DMZ into the Tri-Thien-Hue Military Region to overwhelm a large ARVN unit in northern Quang Tri Province and/or seize Quang Tri and Hue. Return the 2nd NVA Division to the Quang Nam/Quang Tin area to seize Hoi An and Tam Ky, thus effectively gaining control of the major population centers (excluding Danang) of MR-1.

MR-2: In the B-3 Front, seize ARVN border outposts near Laos and Cambodia to expand control in the Western Highlands while pre-empting ARVN attacks in Laos and northeast Cambodia. Renew the drive to cut South Vietnam in two by capturing Tam Quan in northern Binh Dinh Province.

MR-3: Return the 5th, 7th, and 9th Divisions to MR-3 to increase pressure on Saigon.

MR-4: Move the Phuoc Long Front (former 1st Division) from western Cambodia to the Delta to reinforce Communist units there and revitalize the main force war.

In Laos

(1) Seize Long Tieng, Savannakhet and Pakse.

(2) Permit the continued existence of the Souvanna government only on the condition that the bombing cease and no more ARVN incursions are allowed.

In Cambodia

(1) Cause the collapse of the Phnom Penh government through selective destruction of FANK's best units and cutting off communication routes around Phnom Penh.

(2) Install Sihanouk and demand an end to ARVN incursions.

Political-Diplomatic Action

(1) Revise the settlement package with new cosmetic formulations and update the current 7-point position to clear up elements of confusion by affirming, for example, that the military aspects of a settlement can precede the political aspects.

(2) Reset the formulation involving the trade-off of the prisoners for a U. S. troop withdrawal date by affirming that the PW's will be released to American authorities for an agreed troop withdrawal date in 1972, and they will be released in increments corresponding to the pace of the troop withdrawals. (Release a group of prisoners as an expression of Hanoi's sincerity in this regard.) Continue to demand also in the context of the PW-troop withdrawal formulation that "Vietnamization" be stopped.

(3) Demand new elections in South Vietnam to invalidate the 3 October presidential election results. Then possibly call for the holding of elections in all Vietnam in accordance with the 1954 Geneva Accords, depending on what sort of administration emerges in Saigon.

(4) Also, assuming that Hanoi changes its attitude toward the UN, call for the admission into the UN of both the DRV and South Vietnam but only after new elections are held in South Vietnam and a "national union government" is established there.

(5) To culminate a successful military campaign in which most of the essential goals have been attained, call for a cease-fire.